



Interventions for Equity in College Access and Success

Contributing Authors

Dr. Lisa Benham Lewis, Fresno County
Office of Education
Lynn Garner, Jacksonville State University
Karen Morris, University of Notre Dame
Dr. Jenna Scott, Westat

Compiled and edited by

Carrie Murthy, Westat
Mihiri Silva, Westat



August 2019

Table of Contents

<u>Section</u>		<u>Page</u>
I	Introduction	1
	i3 and EIR Programs.....	1
	i3 and EIR Communities.....	2
	College Access and Success Community	3
	Contributing Grantees	5
II	Building Staff Capacity to Address Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Through Curriculum and Coaching Supports	6
III	Expanding Technology and Staff Capacity to Improve College Readiness in Rural Schools.....	9
IV	Increasing Equity and Diversity in Advanced Placement Courses	11
V	Conclusion.....	13
 <u>Figure</u>		
1	Guiding questions.....	4

I. Introduction

In May 2019, the Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) and Education Innovation and Research Program (EIR) College Access and Success community embarked on a project to co-develop a white paper to compile and share information about their interventions, challenges, and lessons learned. This paper is intended to be a resource for fellow i3 and EIR College Access and Success grantees, the larger community of i3 and EIR grantees, and the broader field of college access.

This chapter introduces the i3 and EIR program and describes the program's College Access and Success community and the development of this paper. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 delve into three different i3 grant projects, sharing key insights from their work in the field. Chapter 5, the conclusion, addresses the importance and urgency of equitable access to higher education, and highlights the ways in which the i3 and EIR program has contributed to the goals of increased college access and success.

i3 and EIR Programs

The i3 program, established under section 14007 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, is a Federal discretionary grant program in the U.S. Department of Education (the Department). It provides funding to support local educational agencies (LEAs) and nonprofit organizations in partnership with one or more LEAs or a consortium of schools. The grants allow eligible entities to expand and develop innovative practices that can serve as models of best practices, allow eligible entities to work in partnership with the private sector and the philanthropic community, and identify and document best practices that can be shared and taken to scale based on demonstrated success.

The i3 program aligns funding amounts with the rigor of supporting evidence. Under this program, the Department awards three types of grants, from greatest amount of funding available to least: (1) "Scale-up grants," (2) "Validation grants," and (3) "Development grants." To be eligible to receive the larger grants, applicants must provide increasingly rigorous evidence of the effectiveness of the strategies, practices, or products that they propose to implement. Once awarded, projects must expand their implementation sites; the three types of grants have different requirements for

expansion that correspond with the amount of funding available. The largest grants carry the expectation that the grantee will serve students in a number of districts and/or states. The Department awarded 172 i3 grants between 2010 and 2016, and i3 grants have served over 2 million students in 50 states and Washington, DC.

EIR was established under section 4611 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act. EIR replaces the i3 program, and “provides funding to create, develop, implement, replicate, or take to scale entrepreneurial, evidence-based, field-initiated innovations to improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students; and rigorously evaluate such innovations. The EIR program is designed to generate and validate solutions to persistent educational challenges and to support the expansion of effective solutions to serve substantially larger numbers of students.”¹ The Department awarded 34 EIR grants in 2017 and 2018.

i3 and EIR Communities

Manhattan Strategy Group (MSG) and its partners Westat and EdScale, LLC provide technical assistance and dissemination support to i3 and EIR grantees. MSG and its partners established several communities with the i3 and EIR program to organize groups of committed grantees who build relationships with one another and other external organizations, share information about their projects to the i3 and EIR Community and outside audiences, and advance the field through their work and sustain momentum of the i3 and EIR program’s outcomes.

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement. (n.d.). *Education and Innovation Research* home page. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved July 17, 2019 from <https://innovation.ed.gov/what-we-do/innovation/education-innovation-and-research-eir/>

MSG and its partners have provided technical assistance and dissemination services for six active i3 and EIR communities:

- College Access and Success;
- Improving School Climate and Social-Emotional Learning;
- Teacher and Principal Effectiveness;
- Improving Rural Achievement;
- STEM and Education Technology for All; and
- Scaling Up and Sustainability.

Every community is led by a technical assistance provider who facilitates opportunities for i3 and EIR grantees to network and to come together to share their work and lessons learned; problem-solve challenging implementation issues; build relationships with each other and leaders in their field; and promote their work together through national venues, such as conferences and publications. Community leads engage grantees in a variety of ways to ensure multiple types of opportunities for meaningful connections. Grantees connect by holding virtual meetings via conference call or web-based conferencing, hosting renowned outside speakers and leading outside organizations on relevant topics, featuring grantees in webinar presentations and in professional conference sessions to speak about their work, and hosting annual public events.

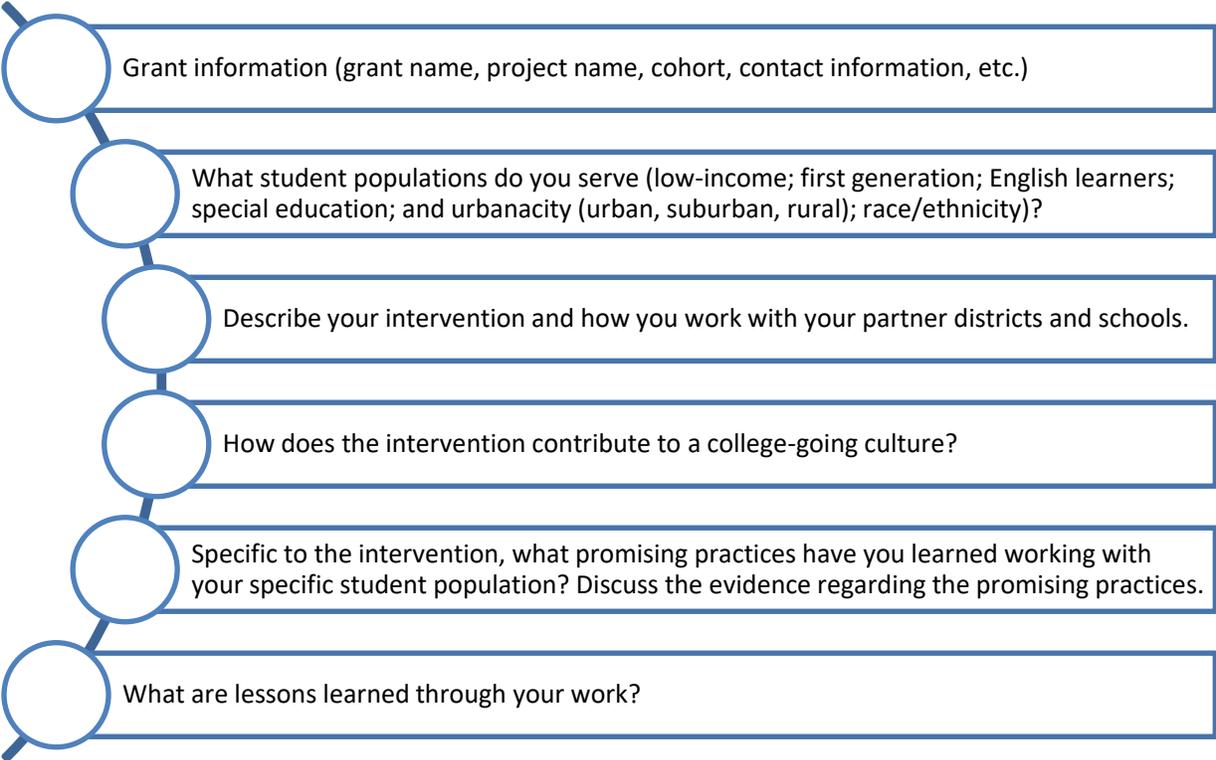
College Access and Success Community

The i3 and EIR grant program has prioritized college access initiatives that call for greater support for college readiness and access. This priority reflects a growing recognition across the Nation of the importance of college access, particularly for students traditionally underrepresented in higher education such as first-generation students; socioeconomically disadvantaged students; Black, Latinx, and American Indian students; rural students; and students with disabilities. The College Access and Success Community brings together i3 and EIR grantees that share a focus on improving college access. The community includes about 70 individuals who have participated in one or more community events since 2014. The participants' interests and needs guide community activities, and the community has created ongoing dialogue and opportunities to collaborate through community calls and regular community emails.

Developing this paper was a collaborative effort of the community. In February 2019, community members responded to a poll about community events and topics of interest for 2019. Several community members indicated an interest in collaborating on a white paper to share their work around college access and equity.

The community leads drafted guiding questions to frame the white paper and collaborated with community members during a May 2019 community meeting to refine the guiding questions and discuss the vision for the white paper. Participating grantees responded to the guiding questions in Figure 1 to inform this paper.

Figure 1. Guiding questions



After participating grantees submitted responses, the community leads held individual followup phone calls with each grantee to further clarify their interventions, challenges, and lessons learned.

Contributing Grantees

Three College Access and Success grantees contributed to the paper, representing three i3 Validation grants. While contributing grantees focus on college access and success, they focus on different areas (such as writing/literacy or science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM)) and serve different types of student populations (such as English Language Learners and first generation college-goers). Below is information about each of the contributing grantees.

Grantee	Project name	Cohort	Areas of focus	Populations of focus	Read more
Fresno County Office of Education	College Readiness via Rhetorical Literacies: Expanding and Validating the Success of the Expository Reading and Writing Course (ERWC)	2016	College-going culture, writing/literacy	English Language Learners, high-poverty students, rural, students with disabilities	Chapter II
Jacksonville State University	Validating the Collaborative Regional Education Model: Technology in Rural High Schools	2015	College-going culture, STEM	High-poverty students, rural	Chapter III
University of Notre Dame/National Math and Science Initiative	Indiana Advanced Placement Teacher Investment Program (AP-TIP IN)	2011	College-going culture, STEM	High-poverty students, rural	Chapter IV

The following chapters tell the stories of these three grantees' work around college access and equity. Chapter 2 describes how Fresno County Office of Education's grant project increased staff capacity to address diversity, equity, and inclusion through curriculum and coaching supports. Chapter 3 discusses Jacksonville State University's (JSU) i3 grant project, which is building capacity in rural schools serving high-poverty students. Chapter 4 shares how the University of Notre Dame and the National Math and Science Initiative's i3 grant project is addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion in Advanced Placement courses.

II. Building Staff Capacity to Address Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Through Curriculum and Coaching Supports

The Fresno County Office of Education’s i3 grant, College Readiness via Rhetorical Literacies: Expanding and Validating the Success of ERWC is a 5-year grant awarded in 2016. The ERWC was found to have positive impacts on students’ English language arts (ELA) achievement in grade 12 through a previous i3 Development grant awarded in 2011. The project serves many underserved students including high-poverty students; English Learners; and students with disabilities in urban, suburban, and rural schools. The ERWC was initially developed as a 12th grade English course to reduce the need for English remediation in college by improving the academic ability of high school seniors in literacy and writing. The project now includes an 11th grade course that was developed in the first 2 years of the i3 grant and was piloted in the 2018-19 school year.

The ERWC is disseminated to schools and English teachers through professional learning that is jointly sponsored by the California State University system and California county offices of education. The professional learning for teachers consists of summer institutes, at least five coaching sessions per year, and five or more community of practice meetings during the school year.

The ERWC curriculum and implementation supports have built staff capacity to better serve all students and address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the classroom. Importantly, the California English Language Development (ELD) Standards—adopted in 2012—were incorporated into the curriculum. Teachers are provided with ERWC implementation supports, including modules that integrate both ELA and ELD standards with designated activities to support English Learners in selected modules. Depending on the needs of their students, teachers can pull an activity that would help reteach a concept or provide more in-depth front loading before the next activity.

Project Director Dr. Lisa Benham Lewis describes that these curriculum and implementation supports have provided teachers with strong tools for supporting English Learners and increasing their engagement in the classroom. The curriculum introduces a variety of literary works incorporating diverse cultures, and presenting new opportunities to English Learners. For example,

the curriculum incorporates *Zoot Suit*, based on the first Chicano play on Broadway. Dr. Lewis described how this lesson changed the tone of the class to be more inclusive:

[Studying *Zoot Suit*] has really given kids that speak Spanish an opportunity to be the leaders in the classroom. We saw a turnaround of the entire class. I had been seeing these kids kind of sitting back and not engaged, but when the teacher introduced *Zoot Suit*, it provided an opportunity for English Learners to be the leaders in the class. They had something major to offer, whereas they hadn't felt that in the past. The culminating activity for the kids was that they had to write the next scene, and then get up and perform it. They really rose to the occasion for their own learning, and that really set the tone for the rest of the year. It reiterated for us that we always need to be considering what the students could offer to the lesson to keep them at that level of engagement.

This example illustrates how the ERWC curriculum increases teachers' awareness of student engagement and inclusion, and increases the teachers' capacity to provide a more inclusive classroom environment.

The ERWC curriculum materials and implementation supports also include modules to support a college-going culture. Modules for ERWC include activities that prepare students for college such as applying for financial aid, submitting college applications, setting goals, writing essays, requesting recommendations, preparing for tests, and researching potential career paths. ERWC inspires students to set and achieve high goals and encourages students' aspirations to attend college and become lifelong learners. These values are especially important for students who may not be considering college—students with poor grades, students from middle- to low-income families, underrepresented racial and ethnic minority students, and students from families in which no one has attended college. Through these modules, which provide essential supports to teachers, the program builds staff capacity to address issues of equity in college access.

The professional learning opportunities provided to teachers, including coaching sessions and communities of practice, have also been key to the project's success. This peer support has been instrumental, particularly for teachers in some of the more rural, geographically secluded schools, including schools on American Indian reservations. Teachers in such schools reported feeling very secluded and didn't feel like they had anyone to talk to who understood the challenges of implementing the program. To better support these teachers, the project began providing web-based conferencing and connection opportunities with teachers in other secluded schools. Using technology has enabled teachers to have someone to talk to about the curriculum, and has re-

engaged and excited about them about the curriculum they are teaching. Through these myriad professional supports, the program is able to build staff capacity to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion across a broad range of schools and locations.

III. Expanding Technology and Staff Capacity to Improve College Readiness in Rural Schools

JSU's i3 grant, Validating the Collaborative Regional Education Model: Technology in Rural High Schools, was awarded in 2015 and is a 4-year grant. The project serves high-poverty students in rural schools, and focuses on improving college and career readiness with high school students. The model includes the school administrator and teachers from five key content areas: math, science, ELA, social studies, and career tech students. The project includes six components:

1. **Partnership building**, which includes networking and implementing a university partner model.
2. **Technology**. Each treatment school received \$25,000 to upgrade technology to support the model. Schools conducted needs analyses and determined how to spend the money. Control schools are business as usual and received \$2,500.
3. **Classroom Support**. Each treatment school receives support virtually from an Educational Technology Support Specialist (ETSS) on a monthly basis. However, the teachers and administrator are expected to complete the coursework on their own. The ETSS provides guidance on the group presentation.
4. **Project-based learning** supporting an active learning model. The teachers complete a soft-skills assessment based on the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards. Teachers in treatment schools complete a soft skills self-assessment three times during the grant period (a pre-test, a test at the midpoint, and a post-test), and based on the results, teachers are placed in individual learning paths and complete microcourses. The teachers then come together and virtually present on what they learned and how they are implementing the model.
5. **College and career readiness** support is through EdReady, which is a personalized learning system for 7th through 12th grade students who will be tested for their competency in math or English. A key purpose of EdReady is to help students to detect gaps in their readiness and then give them the resources they need to achieve the competency expectations.
6. **Change management** administered through a vendor. Teachers complete an online survey that measures culture change after implementing the model. The vendor works with administrators to conduct the survey and subsequent analysis.

A previous i3 grant awarded in 2013 validated the model within individual classrooms through a local study, then expanded to a national-level study. Feedback from the 2013 grant indicated that participating teachers felt isolated being the only teacher in a school that was implementing the program. Following this feedback, the 2015 grant expands the program to the entire high school. This expansion has been received positively; schools better understand the model and teachers can better work together.

Having expanded from a classroom model locally at the start of its 2013 i3 grant to a whole-school model nationally through its current grant, JSU has learned several important lessons about scaling up and expanding programs. Project Director Lynn Garner shared the importance of defining roles early and establishing strong communication, which she says is especially important in rural schools:

A big part of this grant work is implementing the model in rural schools—and that’s a challenge! We had to define and develop those relationships. We had already been cultivating the relationships for about 3 years before we got the first grant. When you bring in all of the other pieces—an external evaluator, a testing or an assessment provider, or a change management vendor—you really have to figure out *who is going to do what* and *how are we going to do this...* especially when it comes to testing. We were meeting weekly when we were setting up the beginning testing, and I think that that really helped us as we went on... when moved to the national phase, we had learned from local-level implementation how important those weekly meetings were.

Ms. Garner also stressed the importance of meeting teachers where they are, and realizing that each teacher is an individual. Just as educators should not expect that all students will learn the same, teachers should not all be expected to learn the same. Teachers have specific needs too, and Ms. Garner noted that the soft skills assessment really helped to work that point out, putting teachers in their own individualized learning pathways.

IV. Increasing Equity and Diversity in Advanced Placement Courses

The University of Notre Dame and the National Math and Science Initiative's i3 grant, Indiana AP-TIP IN, was awarded a 5-year grant in 2012 and the project is now in its seventh year. AP-TIP IN serves schools with greater populations of high-poverty students; Black students; and Latinx students in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

AP-TIP IN is a STEM-focused college with a career readiness strategy that enhances teachers' expertise, and provides supports for and incentives to teachers and their students who earn qualifying scores on AP math, science, and English exams. AP TIP-IN works with schools to set goals and provide tools for administrators and counselors, provide resources for schools and families, offers professional learning and instructional coaching for teachers, and communicates changes to AP courses and programs. The program validates the College Board's research that a student who participates in an AP course has a greater chance to persist in college and graduate on time. Students in the program are prepared in high school to face the challenge of college-level work.

In an effort to be more purposeful in recruiting underrepresented minority and female students to AP courses, AP TIP-IN applied a strategy that studied the use of personalized and positive invitations on participation in AP courses. Teachers at participating schools wrote personalized invitations to female and underrepresented minority students to enroll in their AP math and science classes. These schools experienced a 2.5 times greater increase in participation by underrepresented minority and female students compared to baseline data. Program Director Karen Morris noted that this personalized invitation strategy has been successful—particularly in urban contexts—because those students do not always feel they belong in those classes. Through this strategy, AP TIP-IN has been successful in increasing equity, diversity, and inclusion in AP courses.

Ms. Morris also shared lessons learned through implementing the project:

The guidance office has a lot of decisionmaking power in the school in terms of students' post-secondary decisionmaking process and whether or not a student participates in college readiness classes. We didn't realize we needed to bring guidance staff on board more proactively, and have done so with later cohorts. We've also learned that messages to school administrators don't "trickle down" to teachers as effectively as we'd prefer. We've had to duplicate our communication efforts with teachers to assure that messaging moves in a more streamlined fashion.

In addition, Ms. Morris noted that rural schools often had greater agility to enact a course change during the school year, making them good candidates for research when an intervention may not match a school day and a project needs some flexibility to make the intervention work.

V. Conclusion

The i3 and EIR grant program is an important vehicle for testing, validating, and implementing effective evidence-based college access interventions. Research clearly illustrates the benefits of accessing and completing college. Notably, the College Board's *Education Pays 2016*² report documents how people with college degrees are more likely to be employed, earn more, and have jobs with greater benefits.

Unfortunately, access to higher education is not equitable across the United States for all groups of students. Notably, students who come from families with higher incomes attend college at greater rates than those from families with fewer financial resources.³ Income, however, is not the only factor that contributes to college access differences. As reported by the Department in 2017,⁴ Black and Latinx young adults between 18 – 24 years old were less likely to be enrolled in college compared to White and Asian young adults between the same ages. English Learners are also much less likely to attend college compared to students whose first language is English.⁵ Similarly, rural students are less likely to attend college than students who graduate from urban and suburban high schools.⁶

Recognizing the importance of closing opportunity gaps for underrepresented students in college access is critically important, but we must also focus on implementing effective evidence-based practices to close these gaps. The stories shared above illustrate ways in which organizations have used their i3 and EIR grant funds from the Department to implement an array of promising evidence-based interventions to provide underrepresented students with pathways or resources to access college.

² Ma, J., Pender, M., and Welch, M. (2016). *Education Pays 2016: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society*. New York City: The College Board. Retrieved July 17, 2019 from <https://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/education-pays-2016-full-report.pdf>.

³ DeSilver, D. (2014). *College Enrollment Among Low-Income Students Still Trails Richer Groups*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved July 17, 2019 from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/01/15/college-enrollment-among-low-income-students-still-trails-richer-groups/>.

⁴ National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). College enrollment rates, in *The Condition of Education 2019*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved July 17, 2019 from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_cpb.pdf.

⁵ FN placeholder.

⁶ National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2016). *High School Benchmarks—2016*. Herndon, Virginia: Author. Retrieved July 17 from <https://nscresearchcenter.org/hsbenchmarks2016/>.